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E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PGOV, PFOR, FR, PINT

SUBJECT: FRENCH INTERNAL POLITICAL SCENE -- OCTOBER
1975

REF: A) PARIS 27254; B) PARIS 28504; C) PARIS 28394,
D) PARIS 28506; E) PARIS 26446

SUMMARY: DURING AN OCTOBER 29 COUNCIL OF MINISTERS MEETING, PRESIDENT GISCARD D'ESTAING ANNOUNCED THAT THERE WOULD BE NO "POLITICAL" ELECTIONS IN 1976, THAT IS BEFORE THE MUNICIPAL CONTESTS SCHEDULED FOR 1977. HE THEN CALLED UPON THE MAJORITY TO PROFIT FROM THIS PERIOD OF POLITICAL CALM BY WORKING TOWARD MEANINGFUL REFORM WHILE ESCHEWING "NEEDLESS POLEMICS." ALTHOUGH GISCARD'S REMARKS APPEAR PRINCIPALLY DIRECTED TOWARD HIS OWN MAJORITY WHERE INDEPENDENT REPUBLICAN-GAULLIST WRANGLING HAS REACHED EMBARRASSING PROPORTIONS, THEY ALSO HIGHLIGHT THE MOST STRIKING POLITICAL FEATURE OF THE MONTH OF OCTOBER -- SQUABBLES ON BOTH SIDES OF THE POLITICAL SPECTRUM BETWEEN COALITION PARTNERS OVER THEIR RESPECTIVE PREROGATIVES AND ROLES. FOR THE MOST PART, CONFLICTS HAVE REVOLVED AROUND THE NEED FOR A "REBALANCING" OF PARTY STRENGTHS WITHIN THESE TWO GROUPINGS. ELSEWHERE, A TACIT TRUCE, IN TERMS OF PUBLIC STATEMENTS, APPEARS TO BE IN EFFECT BETWEEN CERTAIN ELEMENTS OF THE MAJORITY AND THE SOCIALISTS. END SUMMARY.

1. REBALANCING ON THE RIGHT: DURING OCTOBER, SUCH DISPARATE MAJORITY FIGURES AS MICHEL DEBRE, OLIVIER GUICHARD AND JEAN-JACQUES SERVAN-SCHREIBER, AS WELL AS MAJOR SEGMENTS OF THE PRESS, HAVE CRITICIZED GISCARD'S MAJORITY FOR APPEARING TO PAY MORE ATTENTION TO INTERNAL POLITICAL JOCKEYING THAN TO THE MAJOR PROBLEMS FACING THE NATION. THE MOST OBVIOUS EXAMPLE WAS BICKERING BETWEEN GAULLISTS (UDR) AND INDEPENDENT REPUBLICANS (IR) OVER THE IR PROFESSED NEED TO "REBALANCE" THE MAJORITY COALITION. MINISTER OF THE
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INTERIOR AND IR CHIEF MICHEL PONIATOWSKI BROUGHT THE ISSUE INTO THE OPEN ON OCTOBER 10. REACTING TO POLLS SHOWING UDR SLIPPAGE AND IR GAINS, HE STATED THAT THE IR WAS NOW CLEARLY "THE" PARTY OF THE MAJORITY. ON OCTOBER 25, BEFORE SOME 20,000 YOUNG GISCARDIANS, HE FOLLOWED UP BY URGING A "REBALANCING" OF THE MAJORITY TO REFLECT VOTER PREFERENCES.

2. PRIME MINISTER CHIRAC, SPEAKING FOR THE GAULLISTS, HAS INDICATED THAT REBALANCING MAY INDEED BE IN ORDER BUT THAT IT SHOULD BE ACHIEVED BY A STRENGTHENING OF ALL THREE COMPONENTS OF THE MAJORITY VIS-A-VIS THE OPPOSITION RATHER THAN THROUGH GROWTH OF ONE MAJORITY COMPONENT AT THE EXPENSE OF ITS PARTNERS. CENTRIST SPOKESMEN REACTED SIMILARLY. THEY HAVE POINTED OUT THAT A STRONG CENTRIST GROUPING WAS ESSENTIAL TO MAINTAIN A BALANCED VOTER APPEAL.

3. THUS GISCARD'S REMARKS CONFIRMING THAT THERE WOULD BE NO 1976 NATIONAL ASSEMBLY ELECTIONS AND CALLING FOR AN END TO "NEEDLESS POLEMICS" ARE BEING INTERPRETED BY SOME OBSERVERS AS REFLECTING THIS INTERNAL MAJORITY SPAT AND AS CONSTITUTING A CLEAR ORDER TO CEASE AND DESIST. RECENT POLLS INDICATING GROWING SOCIALIST AND LEFTIST VOTER APPEAL PROBABLY PROVIDE AN ADDITIONAL

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REASON FOR GISCARD'S DECISION TO PUT OFF LEGISLATIVE CONTESTS. BUT THERE MAY BE ANOTHER FACTOR INVOLVED AS WELL. AFTER ALL, WILL THE LACK OF PRESSING LEGISLATIVE CONTESTS REALLY PRODUCE TRANQUILLITY AND A SENSE OF PURPOSE AMONG MAJORITY PARTIES? OR WILL AN ELECTORAL VOID MERELY REMOVE PRESSURES ON THE MAJORITY TO BAND TOGETHER AGAINST THE LEFT? WITH THE POWERS OF THE PRESIDENCY IN TERMS OF MINISTRIES, PATRONAGE, ETC. AT HIS DISPOSAL, GISCARD MAY FEEL THAT AN EXPLICIT WARNING IS ALL THAT IS NECESSARY TO BRING THE MAJORITY TO HEEL. IF THIS IS THE CASE, THEN HIS ANNOUNCEMENT COULD AT LEAST PARTIALLY BE DESIGNED TO DEPRIVE THE OPPOSITION OF AN ELECTORAL CHALLENGE WHICH MIGHT PROMPT THAT FEUDING COALITION TO FORGET ITS DIFFERENCES IN TIME OF COMMON THREAT.

4. REBALANCING ON THE LEFT: IT WAS, OF COURSE, A SERIES OF ELECTORAL CONTESTS, THE LATEST CHATELLERAULT WHICH FANNED THE LONG SMOULDERING CONTROVERSY WITHIN THE LEFT TO ITS NEWLY HEATED STATE (REFTEL A). THE CHATELLERAULT BY-ELECTION STUNG THE COMMUNISTS (PCF) DEEPLY. THEIR OWN CANDIDATE WAS BEATEN IN FIRST ROUND VOTING BY A SOCIALIST (PS) IN A DISTRICT WHERE A COMMUNIST HAS TRADITIONALLY REPRESENTED THE LEFT. PCF SECRETARY-GENERAL GEORGES MARCHAIS REACTED BY TERMING THE REPUTED FAILURE OF SOME COMMUNISTS TO SUPPORT THE

PS CANDIDATE IN CHATELLERAULT SECOND ROUND BALLOTING AS A "WARNING" THAT IF THE PS CONTINUES TO SEEK "DOMINATION" ON THE LEFT, IT WILL NOT BE ABLE TO COUNT ON FULL PCF SUPPORT IN FUTURE ELECTIONS. SUBSEQUENTLY, MARCHAIS AND OTHER PCF SPOKESMEN CALLED FOR A "REBALANCING" OF THE UNITED LEFT.

5. THE SOCIALISTS, THROUGH PS FIRST SECRETARY FRANCOIS MITTERRAND, ARE PUBLICLY IGNORING COMMUNIST ATTACKS (REFTEL B). NEVERTHELESS, BY VARIOUS MEANS THE PS IS CONTINUING TO FEED COMMUNIST FEARS THAT IT IS STRIVING TO FURTHER ENCROACH ON THE PCF ELECTORATE. CONFIDENTIAL

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MITTERRAND, HIMSELF, HAS CITED RECENT POLLS GIVING THE SOCIALISTS 30 PERCENT OF THE VOTE IN HYPOTHETICAL ELECTIONS AS INDICATING THAT THE PS IS THE LEADING FRENCH POLITICAL PARTY. HE HAS, MOREOVER, GONE SO FAR AS TO SAY THAT THIS IS WHAT FRANCE REQUIRES -- A LEADING PARTY IMBUED WITH THE PRINCIPLES OF SOCIALISM AND LIBERTY.

6. BOTH MITTERRAND AND SOCIALIST MAYOR OF MARSEILLE GASTON DEFFERRE HAVE EMPHASIZED THAT PROSPECTS FOR COMBINED PCF-PS ELECTORAL LISTS DURING THE 1977 MUNICIPAL ELECTIONS ARE DIM. "NO ALLIANCE UNDER THREAT," WERE MITTERRAND'S WORDS. THE PS PUSH TO STRENGTHEN ITS PRESENCE IN FACTORIES, IN DIRECT COMPETITION WITH ALREADY ESTABLISHED COMMUNIST SECTIONS, IS ALSO SEEN AS A MAJOR THREAT BY THE PCF. LILLE SOCIALIST DEPUTY/MAYOR PIERRE MAUROY HAS JUSTIFIED THIS TACTIC BY ASSERTING THAT THERE IS NO "ONE" PARTY OF THE PROLETARIAT BUT RATHER THAT "TWO GREAT POLITICAL GROUPINGS" REPRESENT THE WORKING CLASS. PS NATIONAL SECRETARY PIERRE BEREGOVVOY SIMILARLY HAS DESCRIBED AS DEFECTIVE THE 'VANGUARD OF THE PROLETARIAT' CONCEPT DEAR TO COMMUNIST HEARTS BECAUSE IT IGNORES THE FACT THAT THE PCF DOES NOT HAVE A MONOPOLY ON WORKER ALLEGIANCES AND BECAUSE IT FALSELY IMPLIES THAT THE COMMUNISTS ALONE ARE ENTITLED TO JUDGE WHAT IS BEST FOR THE WORKING CLASS.

7. AGAINST THIS BACKGROUND' AND GIVEN RECENT MITTERRAND STATEMENTS THAT PRESIDENT GISCARD IS A MAN OF "GOOD WILL" NOT ENTIRELY RESPONSIBLE FOR GOVERNMENT FAILINGS, THE PCF IS ATTEMPTING TO PICTURE THE PS AS ANGLING FOR SOME SORT OF CLOSER RELATIONSHIP WITH ELEMENTS OF THE MAJORITY. MARCHAIS HAS ISSUED A STRONGLY WORDED PUBLIC STATEMENT INDICATING THAT THE FEBRUARY PCF CONGRESS

WILL BE DEVOTED EXCLUSIVELY TO EXAMINING MEANS TO
REINFORCE THE PCF POSITION WITHIN THE LEFT. HIS
STATEMENT POINTEDLY IGNORED THE COMMON PROGRAM, AND
IS BEING INTERPRETED BY SOME OBSERVERS AS AN INITIAL
EXPRESSION OF PCF DESIRES TO WITHDRAW FROM THE UNITED
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LEFT.

8. A TACIT TRUCE BETWEEN THE SOCIALISTS AND ELEMENTS
OF THE MAJORITY?: IT IS CURIOUS THAT DURING A PERIOD
WHEN POLLS ARE DESIGNATING THE SOCIALISTS AND THE

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INDEPENDENT REPUBLICANS AS THE TWO POLITICAL FORMATIONS CURRENTLY ON THE RISE THAT THESE SAME TWO PARTIES APPEAR TO BE IGNORING EACH OTHER IN THEIR PUBLIC STATEMENTS. THE PS, THROUGH MITTERRAND, IS ATTACKING PRIME MINISTER CHIRAC AS THE "STRONG MAN" OF A REGIME DOMINATED BY THE UDR. PONIATOWSKI HAS PASSED OVER THE SOCIALISTS TO ATTACK THE COMMUNISTS WITH SOME OF HIS STRONGEST LANGUAGE TO DATE.

TARGETING IS LEADING SOME OBSERVERS, SUCH AS OLIVIER GUICHARD, TO WONDER WHETHER THE MAJORITY IS NOT IGNORING THE REAL DANGER TO ITS POSITION -- THAT OF A RESURGENT SOCIALIST PARTY.

9. GISCARD, HIMSELF, HAS NOTED, DURING A LUNCH FOR THE TWELVE YOUNGEST MAJORITY PARLIAMENTARIANS, RECENT ANTI-COMMUNIST ATTACKS BY MAJORITY FIGURES. THROUGH THE ELYSEE SPOKESMAN, HE SUBSEQUENTLY LET IT BE KNOWN THAT HE WISHED TO SEE SUCH CRITICISM CEASE. THIS ATTITUDE CORRESPONDS WITH THE PRESIDENT'S OFTEN STATED DESIRE TO PROMOTE A MORE "RELAXED" POLITICAL ENVIRONMENT. BUT IT IS POSSIBLE THAT HE HAD ANOTHER GOAL IN MIND AS WELL -- TO AVOID PUSHING THE SOCIALISTS INTO A POSITION WHERE THEY WOULD FEEL COMPELLED TO COME TO THE ASSISTANCE OF THEIR PCF ALLIES.

10. NATIONAL ASSEMBLY SESSION: IF SPECULATION REGARDING POSSIBLE TACIT COOPERATION BETWEEN ELEMENTS OF THE MAJORITY AND THE OPPOSITION HAS ANY BASIS IN FACT, THE EFFECTS HAVE YET TO BE NOTED IN NATIONAL ASSEMBLY VOTING PATTERNS. DURING ITS FALL SESSION WHICH OPENED IN EARLY OCTOBER, THE ASSEMBLY THUS FAR HAS ADOPTED SEVERAL MAJOR SEGMENTS OF THE GOVERNMENT'S 1976 BUDGET REQUEST INCLUDING THE RECEIPTS (TAXATION AND REVENUE) SECTION OF THE BUDGET PROPOSAL. DEPUTIES ARE NOW CONSIDERING VARIOUS EXPENDITURE ITEMS AND HAVE ALREADY PASSED SEVERAL SECTIONS SUCH AS

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THOSE BEARING ON FOREIGN AFFAIRS, DEFENSE, AND FOREIGN ASSISTANCE (REFTELS C AND D). IN EVERY CASE, THE VOTE FOR ADOPTION CARRIED WITH PROS AND CONS DIVIDING ALMOST EXACTLY ALONG MAJORITY - OPPOSITION LINES. THE LARGEST MAJORITY DEFECTION, AND THIS WAS MINIMAL, CAME DURING THE VOTE ON A NON-BUDGET ITEM, THE CONTROVERSIAL GOVERNMENT SPONSORED URBAN PROPERTY REFORM BILL (REFTEL E). AFTER CONSIGNING THE MAJOR STUMBLING BLOCK -- A PROPERTY TAX AMENDMENT -- TO THE OBLIVION OF A SPECIAL COMMITTEE, THE ASSEMBLY ADOPTED THE GOVERNMENT MEASURE BY A VOTE OF 283 TO 185, WITH 10 MAJORITY DEPUTIES SIDING WITH THE OPPOSITION.

12. AS NOTED IN PREVIOUS REPORTING, THE GOVERNMENT INTENDS THIS SPRING TO INTRODUCE ADDITIONAL REFORM MEASURES INVOLVING A CAPITAL GAINS TAX, UPGRADING MANUAL LABOR AND CORPORATE REFORM. NATIONAL ASSEMBLY PERFORMANCE SO FAR SUGGESTS THAT IF THE GOVERNMENT IS SERIOUS ABOUT SUCH MEASURES (AND IF GISCARD CONFIRMS HIS OWN PERSONAL INTEREST, AS HE DID ON URBAN PROPERTY REFORM), THE MAJORITY WILL FALL INTO LINE. THIS CERTAINLY DOES NOT RULE OUT HEATED DEBATE WITHIN THE MAJORITY AND BETWEEN THE MINORITY AND THE OPPOSITION, ESPECIALLY ON THE ISSUE OF A CAPITAL GAINS TAX. DEBATE THROUGH NEWSPAPER EDITORIALS HAS ALREADY BEGUN AND SHOWS EVERY INDICATION OF BECOMING INCREASINGLY CONTENTIOUS AS THE MONTHS PASS. BUT ASSUMING GISCARD'S PERSONAL SUPPORT, WE EXPECT THAT THESE REFORM PROPOSALS WILL EVENTUALLY MEET WITH PARLIAMENTARY ACCEPTANCE -- ALTHOUGH THE MEASURES THEMSELVES, ESPECIALLY THE CAPITAL GAINS TAX, SEEM CERTAIN TO BE WATERED DOWN.

13. POTPOURI: ACCORDING TO POLLS PUBLISHED DURING THE MONTH OF OCTOBER, LAW AND ORDER HAS BECOME THE SECOND RANKING PREOCCUPATION (BEHIND THE ECONOMY) AMONG FRENCHMEN. THE GOVERNMENT IS PROMISING A FURTHER CRACKDOWN EFFORT. MINISTER OF THE INTERIOR

PONIATOWSKI HAS CRITICIZED SOME JUDGES FOR BEING
TOO LENIENT AND, EARLY IN NOVEMBER, PRIME MINISTER
CHIRAC PAID A WELL-PUBLICIZED VISIT TO A NATIONAL
GENDARME CENTER WHERE HE PLEDGED "NO MERCY" FOR
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CRIMINALS TAKING HOSTAGES.

14. SENATOR AND FORMER LEFT RADICAL VICE PRESIDENT
HENRI CAILLAVET HAS SET UP A "WELCOME HOUSE"
COMMITTEE FOR DISGRUNTLED LEFTISTS NOT YET READY TO

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ENTER THE MAJORITY. THE GROUP REPORTEDLY HAS ATTRACTED SOME LIKE-MINDED CENTRIST POLITICAL FIGURES ALONG WITH A SMATTERING OF INTERESTED LEFT RADICALS, BUT SO FAR NO NEW CONVERTS FROM THE LEFT.

15. GISCARD HAS DESIGNATED NOVEMBER AS "REGIONALISM MONTH" AND PLANS TO PARTICIPATE IN AT LEAST ONE REGIONAL COUNCIL MEETING. THE BUDGET DEBATE APPARENTLY IS DELAYING THE PROMISED OPPOSITION EFFORT TO INSCRIBE REGIONALISM ON THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY DEBATE SCHEDULE. POLICE ROUNDED UP TWELVE ALLEGED BRETON MILITANTS DURING OCTOBER, PROMPTING OUTCRIES FROM SOCIALIST AND COMMUNIST POLITICIANS. ALSO IN BRITTANY, A UDR DEPUTY'S HOUSE WAS BOMBED, SUPPOSEDLY BY AUTONOMISTS. CORSICA, BY COMPARISON, WAS RELATIVELY CALM IN OCTOBER.

16. IN RESPONSE TO PUBLIC CONCERN OVER THE RECENT RASH OF "BLUE MOVIES," THE GOVERNMENT HAS DECIDED TO LEVY A 33 PERCENT TAX ON ALL FILMS DEALING IN PORNOGRAPHY AND VIOLENCE. IT ALSO PLANS TO RESTRICT THE NUMBER OF THEATERS IN WHICH SUCH FILMS MAY BE SHOWN. THE COMMUNISTS AND OTHERS HAVE REACTED BY TERMING THE GOVERNMENT'S ACTION A FORM OF CENSORSHIP WHILE SOCIALISTS ARE SAYING THAT IT IS UNSEEMLY FOR THE STATE TO PROFIT FROM VICE. MEANWHILE, THERE ARE SIGNS THAT THE WAVE MAY HAVE PEAKED. "DEEP THROAT" AND "THE DEVIL IN MISS JONES" HAVE BOMBED IN PARIS, AND THE MOST POPULAR FILM OF RECENT WEEKS -- "FLIC STORY"

-- IS A CLASSIC DETECTIVE THRILLER TOTALLY DEVOID
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